

FACT SHEET: SNAKEBITE PREVENTION IN THE BALKANS AND **FIRST AID PROCEDURES.**

The following information will help you to protect yourself against poisonous snakes in the Balkans and provide you with first aid information in the event of a snakebite.

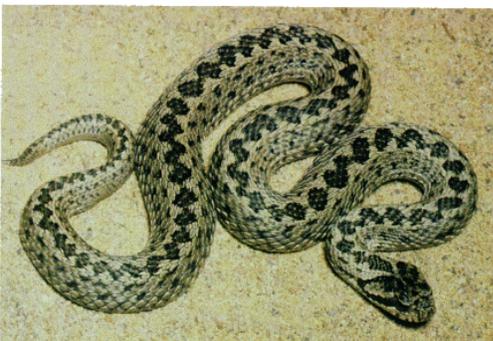
POISONOUS SNAKES IN THE BALKAN THEATER



Long-Nosed Viper (*Vipera ammodytes*)



European Viper (*Vipera berus*)



JOHN H. TASHJIAN/BÖRJE FLARDH

Orsini's Viper (*Vipera ursinii*)

BALKAN POISONOUS SNAKES

- These three vipers are the only poisonous snakes in the Balkan Region.
- Fatalities from Balkan viper snakebites are very rare especially if proper medical treatment is given promptly.
- These vipers may be found up to 5,000 feet in elevation.
- These vipers may be aggressive if disturbed.

WAYS TO AVOID SNAKEBITE – Follow these simple rules to reduce the chance of accidental snakebite.

- **AVOID ALL SNAKES.** Most snakes are more afraid of humans than humans are of snakes, and that, given a chance, they will depart an encounter immediately.
- Avoid walking about at twilight, during the night and shortly after sunrise.
- Avoid snake den areas. Don't put your hands into dark places, such as rock crevices, heavy brush, or hollow logs, without first investigating.
- **DO NOT** sleep on the ground or next to brush, tall grass, large boulders, or trees. They are hiding places for snakes.

- DO NOT step over fallen trees. Step on the log and look to see if there is a snake on the other side.
- DO NOT walk through heavy brush or tall grass without looking down. Look where you are walking.
- DO NOT sit down in areas possibly infested with snakes without looking around first.
- DO NOT handle freshly killed snakes; always use a stick or other instrument to manipulate them. The nervous system may still be active and a dead snake can deliver a bite.
- DO NOT pick up any snake without reason or without positive knowledge that it is non-poisonous.

IN CASE OF POISONOUS SNAKEBITE.

Snake: Make sure that the responsible snake has been appropriately and safely contained or disposed of and out of danger of inflicting additional bites. If possible, bring the dead snake inside a container with the patient to the hospital. This may aid in identifying the species of poisonous snake and aid in the treatment of the patient.

IMMEDIATE FIRST AID FOR THE VICTIM:

- **GET THE VICTIM TO THE HOSPITAL AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.**
- **KEEP THE VICTIM CALM AND REASSURED.**

- Have the **VICTIM LIE DOWN ON THE SPOT** and avoid unnecessary movement. It is important that the patient remains resting and warm.
- Examine the site of the bite. The presence of one or two fang marks generally confirms the possibility of snakebite.
- **IMMEDIATELY IMMOBILIZE THE BITTEN EXTREMITY IN A POSITION BELOW THE LEVEL OF THE HEART.**
- Remove any tight-fitting jewelry or clothing (ring, bracelet, watch, boots) on effected limb.
- Immediately wrap a large constricting bandage snugly about the bitten limb at a level just above the bite site, i.e., between the bite site and the heart. The constricting band should be as tight as one might bind a sprained ankle, but not so tight as to constrict the blood flow. Immobilize the affected extremity with a splint.
- DO NOT remove the constricting band or splint until the victim has reached the hospital.
- **DO NOT cut or incise the bite site.**
- **DO NOT apply ice to the bite site.**
- Pain and swelling at the site of the bite that develops within one hour are reliable indicators of poisonous snakebite.

**Commander, U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine - Europe, ATTN: MCHB-AE-EN,
CMR 402, APO AE 09180 DSN: 486-8540, FAX: 486-8954**